

## **Senate Bill 892 (As Introduced)**

**Contact:** Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs

**Agency:** Labor & Economic Growth

<b>Topic:</b>	Work First Participation Requirements
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Senator Hardiman
<b>Co-Sponsors:</b>	None
<b>Committee:</b>	Senate Families and Human Services
<b>Date Introduced:</b>	November 10, 2005
<b>Date of Summary:</b>	November 17, 2005

The bill would change the existing work first participation requirements and require the Department of Human Services in cooperation with the Department of Labor & Economic Growth (DLEG) to develop a "Family Independence Plan (FIP)". The FIP would identify goals, responsibilities, expectations, and sanctions that constitute a contractual obligation for the recipient and list the family's current barriers to employment and self sufficiency. The bill would require DLEG to monitor the FIP for all who are referred to the work first program. Recipients are required to review, sign, and date the FIP each time he or she meets with a case worker, including times when the recipient fails to meet an expectation or is in non-compliance with the FIP.

A recipient who is unable to find employment or be placed by the Work First program into a job is required to participate in training or counseling for not less than 10 hours per week in six specified areas, including marriage, fatherhood, parenting, self-improvement, substance abuse, or volunteer activities.

Both departments are required to track recipients by social security number. DLEG is also required to track the recipient's job status for not less than one year and share the information between the two departments. The information is required to be shared with the Legislature.

The departments are required to develop individual program goals and measurable performance indicators to be reviewed for success or failure annually. The bill provides for the reporting of FIP success or failure rates to the Legislature during the annual budget review by both the Department of Human Services and DLEG based on each department's individual program goals and measurable performance indicators. It also provides for quarterly reporting of the percentage of Family Independence Program caseload involved in employment activities to the Appropriations Subcommittees on DHS in the Senate and House, the Senate and House Fiscal Agencies, and the Senate and House policy staff.

The bill mandates that one individual program goal be that the percentage of Family Independence Program caseload involved in employment activities be not less than 50% of the caseload. This percentage is required to be reported on a quarterly basis to the Legislature. If the percentage is below the 50% goal for more than 2 consecutive quarters, the Department of Human Services is required to develop a plan for increasing the percentage. The plan would be delivered during the following annual budget presentations to the legislative budget subcommittees.

A recipient who does not have a high school diploma or GED and is unable to sustain employment would be required to enroll in a course to obtain a diploma or GED. The current 2-year limitation on education and training is deleted and replaced with a 24-month lifetime limit on a recipient's participation in education and training. Education or training course responsibilities, including attendance, performance, and minimum grade point, are required to be outlined in the expectations section of the FIP. This language replaces the current requirement that the recipient must be making satisfactory progress. A recipient who is not in compliance with or meeting the expectations of the FIP may not use education or training toward fulfilling the 40-hour per week work requirement.

The bill additionally removes existing language that would grant a temporary exemption from participating in work first and replaces it with new language that would allow for an exemption from the work first requirements under certain conditions.

At the discretion of the Work First caseworker, up to 20 hours per week of education or training may be counted toward the 40-hour per week work requirement. Alternatively, the case worker may allow a recipient to be exempt from Work First requirements for a lifetime maximum of 6 months in cases where the recipient is able to demonstrate the current demand for workers with specific education or training. A recipient in education and training who is exempt from work participation requirements is required to meet with his or her caseworker at least once every 45 days. The recipient must meet the expectations outlined in the FIP to continue receiving the exemption.